

# CAMP OCONTO

FOUNDED 1925

A Summer Camp for Girls  
From Seven to Fifteen Years of Age,  
Situating Near Sharbot Lake, Ontario.



#### Co-Directors

June Kennedy Labbett  
 Lisa Labbett Wilson  
 Bruce R. Wilson  
 E. Clifford Labbett



Oconto was founded in 1925 by Miss Ferna Graham Halliday, who continued in active Directorship until her retirement in 1949. June and Clifford Labbett directed the camp activities from 1949 until 1983, and now the third generation, Lisa Labbett Wilson and her husband are the Camp Directors. The Labbetts live at Camp Oconto during the summer and provide invaluable assistance and guidance in all camp activities. In addition to her responsibilities with the Ontario Camping Association and the Society of Camp Directors, June Labbett is a Board Member of the Trafalgar Castle School, Whitby, Ontario. Cliff Labbett is Past President of both the Ontario and Canadian Camping Associations and is an active participant in Camping Association and Society of Camp Director's Committees.

Camp Oconto, located on Eagle Lake, approximately 10 kilometers south of Sharbot Lake, is the ideal site for children's camping. Situated only 60 kilometers north of Kingston, Ontario, the camp is easily reached via Highway 7 to Sharbot Lake Junction and south on Highway 38 to the camp road. Chartered buses carry the campers to and from camp in chaperoned groups. The camp, located in the heart of the Land O' Lakes tourist region, boasts over 100 acres of sandy well drained property in an area of all land and water activities. The campers live in tents and cabins which circle the main bay giving both view and access to the water. Many large shade trees give protection from the sun, yet the property is open enough so that dampness following rain is rarely a problem. Camp farmland on nearby Crow Lake and camp islands on Eagle Lake provide excellent sites for cook-outs, overnights and canoe trips.

Camping today has come to be recognized as a vital part of a child's education. Camp is a world where children can discover the joys of learning about themselves, the environment around them, and how to live with others.

Under careful supervision and in a programme suited to each child's needs, Camp Oconto endeavors to give each camper a safe and happy experience. Here she makes life-long friends who, with her, come to appreciate the fun of learning outdoor skills. The safety of each child stands first and foremost in minds of our trained counsellors.

In the presentation of such an experience from age 7 to 15, the Directors give



careful thought to each phase of a camper's life during her stay at Oconto. This responsibility is shared jointly by Lisa and Bruce Wilson. Lisa directs the camp, working closely with the staff and campers on a personal basis; Bruce devoting his time to business administration, food service and maintenance.

After working with June and Clifford Labbett in 1981, as Assistant Directors and the following year as Co-directors, Lisa and Bruce Wilson have assumed the role of Directors. Having grown up at Oconto, Lisa is well prepared and trained

to guide campers and staff, and to direct the various activities and programmes at camp. Lisa has been a camper, counsellor in training, counsellor, activity head and section head at Oconto.

To broaden her experience, Lisa has been a staff member at other Ontario camps, taught outdoor education to various University groups, provided leadership at several outdoor skill camps



and was a delegate at the Colorado Outward Bound School. Lisa is a member of the Board of the Ontario Camping Association, and serves on the executive of the Society of Camp Directors, and is also involved in several community volunteer organizations. Lisa graduated from the University of Waterloo with a degree in Environmental Studies.

Bruce Wilson joined the Oconto staff in 1980 as the assistant in charge of administration, maintenance, and food service. A native of Muskoka, Bruce spent his past summers actively involved with the organization and maintenance of various recreational facilities in the area. Bruce is on the Board of the Ontario Camping Association, and does volunteer work with numerous community groups. Bruce holds a degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Waterloo.

## Camp Personnel

The counsellor is one of the most important factors in a girl's happiness while she is attending camp. Therefore, Oconto gives a great deal of time and thought to the selection of each staff member. Counsellors are chosen for their leadership qualities, maturity, natural love of children, and their experience with camp activities and instruction. The majority of Oconto staff



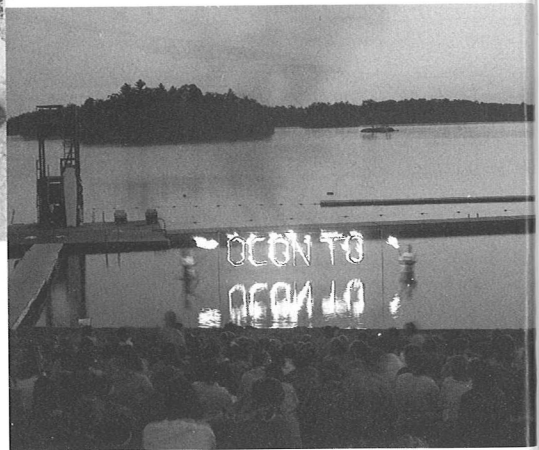
have worked through our two year Counsellor in Training programme and are very familiar and dedicated to the campers and the programme.

For one week before camp opens, an in-camp training programme for both new and old staff members gives everyone a chance to familiarize themselves with the camp routines, traditions and innovations. It is a time for discussions, lectures, camp situations, practising activity skills, and having fun together. The objective of this week is not only to give new staff time to adjust, but to ensure that when the campers arrive, the

staff are working together comfortably, and ready to take care of, and teach the campers.

Oconto is divided into five sections with staff especially interested and experienced in each particular age group. Each section has its own lodge with a fireplace, piano and a small library.

The Counsellor in Training programme is a two year programme for girls sixteen and seventeen years old. In the first year of the programme, each sixteen year old girl attends camp for one month. In this four week session she concentrates on improving the skills which she wishes to teach as a counsellor. During this time she is working with the



campers under the close supervision of a counsellor.

In the second year, each seventeen year old girl attends camp for eight weeks. Over these two months her time is spent learning how to demonstrate and teach her individual activities. Under the supervision of a senior staff member, she becomes jointly responsible for a number of campers; an integral part of her summer leadership training.



## Swimming

Many of the Oconto programmes are centered around the waterfront. For this reason, the supervision and teaching of swimming skills is very important. All campers take swimming lessons while they are at camp; either in the Red Cross or Royal Life Saving Society programmes. Everyone may also participate in synchronized swimming, competitive instruction or diving.



Careful precautions are taken when instruction is being given to all levels of swimmers. Soon after arrival at camp all campers participate in a screening test to determine each person's swimming ability.

Trained lifeguards are on duty at all times when there are campers in the water. All campers and staff learn about and adhere to our "buddy" system when swimming. For non or new swimmers, there is a wide sandy beach which is enclosed by docks and buoy lines where they can practise strokes and become more comfortable in and around the water. For the more experienced swimmers, there are four enclosed deep water pools. Facilities for fun times while swimming include diving boards, a slide and a high tower.

## Sailing & Boardsailing

Sailing is one of our most popular activities. The camp has a fleet of Laser I's and Laser II's from which campers learn to sail in a safe yet challenging environment. To fly a spinnaker, hike on a trapeeze, and plane all add to the excitement for the more advanced sailors. Participation is encouraged for all levels of proficiency. Sailing instruction utilizes the Canadian Yachting Association standards.

Boardsailing is a very popular activity. To ensure the safety of all participants, boardsailers must be competent swimmers. Trained instructors organize the daily classes to include the beginner and the more advanced. From a wide selection of



"learner" boards, sail sizes and more advanced boards, the instructors match a camper's ability to the appropriate size board and sail. After a few hours of basic instruction on land and in shallow water, campers meet the challenges of the open water.

## Canoeing & Kayaking

With a large fleet of canoes, both canvas covered and fiberglass, campers learn the fine skill of paddling. Basic instruction in canoeing is taught to everyone. The older girls use the main canoe dock while the younger campers use Stable Bay which is more protected. Those who wish to participate in canoe tripping must first demonstrate their proficiency in various strokes, safety and the care of equipment. If desired, campers may take instruction in the Standards Programme of the Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association.

Kayaking continues to grow in popularity. Campers are taught the

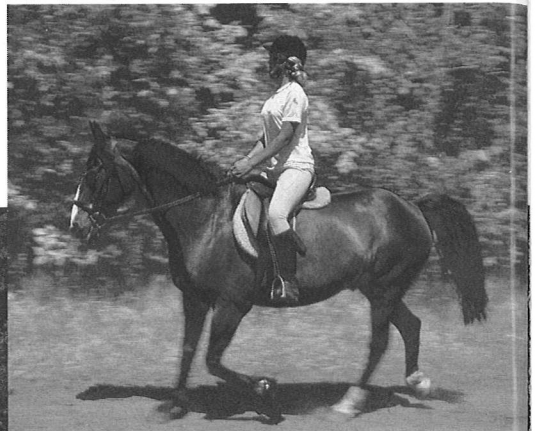


fundamentals; safety, care of equipment, strokes, slalom courses and games. Day trips to run white water are organized for campers who have reached the appropriate level of proficiency.

## Riding

Those who know the joy of a fine horse and love riding open country trails will agree that this is an accomplishment many should master. Opportunity abounds at Oconto. Girls who want to ride well and wish to make a fine appearance wherever they ride, will enjoy the advantages Oconto has to offer with good horses and qualified instruction.

The camper's knowledge of the horse



and her ability to ride are significant factors when planning classes. Instruction is given in the English style of riding, stable management and care of the horse. Advanced riders may participate in jumping and performance rides.

## Music & Drama

An appreciation of good music for many campers has had its origin at Oconto. The Music and Drama Counsellors along with other talented staff and campers present regular Sunday evening concerts. A daily assembly in the Main Lodge involves the whole camp in a sing-song of many camp favorites. Added to this are the regular evening sing-songs which are held in each section of camp – often around a campfire or in their lodges.

Each month there are a number of musical productions staged in the Main Lodge. Quite often each section will put on a show. Lines are learned and the props are made in drama activity periods throughout the month. Initiative and



originality are shown on weekly talent nights as groups of friends make their own presentations.

## Crafts & Pottery

Halliday Hall, named after the founder of Oconto, overlooks Eagle Lake and provides three craft shops; one for materials, leather, tie dying, jewellery, beadwork, and similar pursuits; a second is devoted to pottery, with two potter's wheels and a kiln; and a third craft shop for the younger campers with facilities and equipment adapted to their abilities and needs.



## Tennis

A good tennis player may trace her success directly to the lessons she received when she was first introduced to the game. Tennis classes, friendly games and competitions keep the courts in constant use. Activity instruction and tournaments give enthusiastic players daily opportunities to learn and practise.

Two all-weather courts provide an excellent facility for this popular activity.

## Nature & Tripping

The natural surroundings of camp provide many opportunities to learn something of swamps, river beds, rocks, fields, forests and caves. We endeavour to develop and stimulate the natural curiosity of the camper when confronted by something new to her. For the older campers back-packing trips are offered. The riding trips go up to half day on a number of trails, in and around camp.

Sailing trips take up to one day and travel amongst the islands on Eagle Lake.

Deep in the hearts of most children is



the dream of life in the out-of-doors, expeditions which include trips by canoe, portages, food cooked in the open, plus the close companionship of the camp-fire circle. Tripping, then, becomes a very important part of life at Oconto, but it can only come as a result of learning the very necessary skills of swimming, paddling, and bushcraft.

When campers have passed the required tests, trips are arranged and chaperoned by special tripping counsellors. Campers help to plan menus, plan their route from topographical maps; learn to choose a campsite, pitch tents, cook over an open fire, care for themselves and their equipment, for a period of one to seven days.

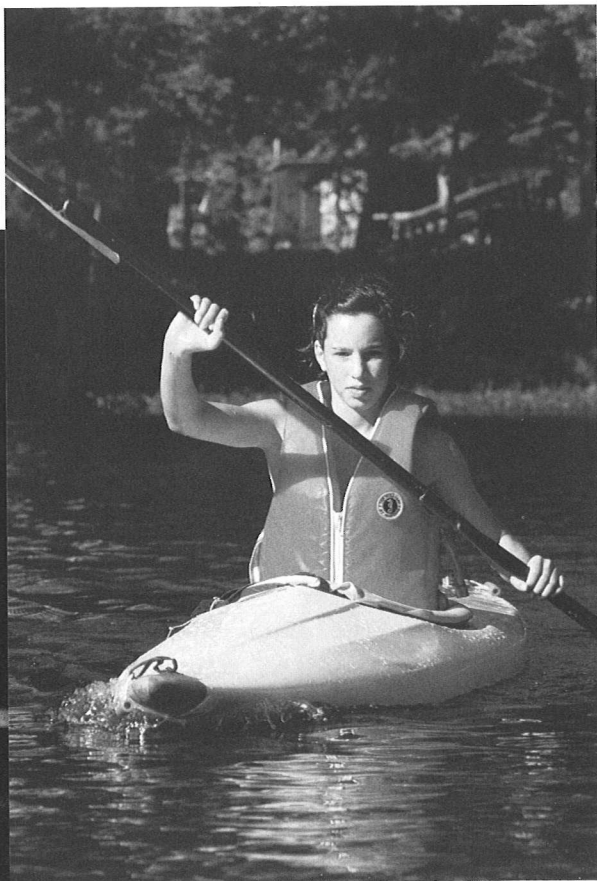
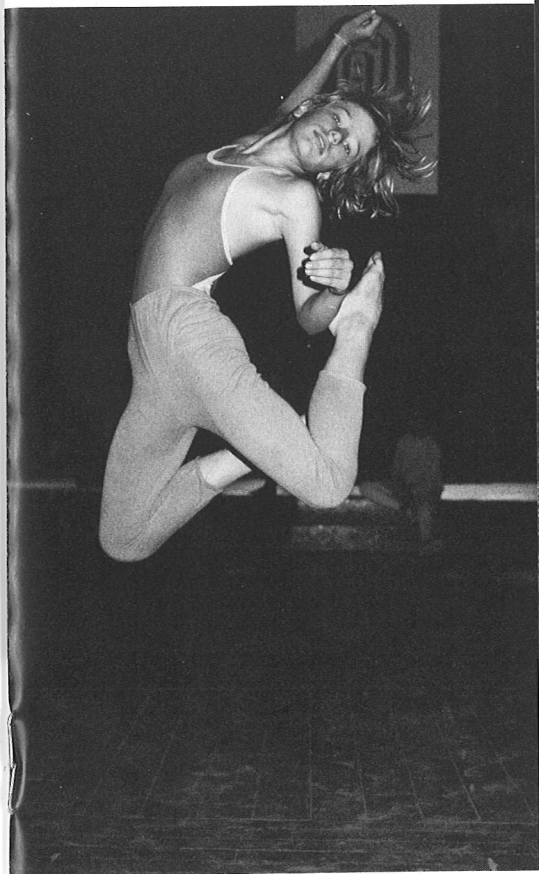




## Dance

Modern dance and Aerobics are so very popular today and particularly at camp. Dancing for the fun of it, for exercise, for Sunday concerts or for a production are enjoyed by many.

Anyone who has seen a stage production featuring modern dance can appreciate the level of expertise required by the performers. At Camp Oconto, we encourage our campers to participate in the dance classes for fun, enjoyment and exercise. Their skills are represented aptly in our Sunday concerts.





The **Margaret Eaton School Digital Collection** is a not-for-profit resource created in 2014-2015 to assist scholars, researchers, educators, and students to discover the Margaret Eaton School archives housed in the Peter Turkstra Library at Redeemer University College. Copyright of the digital images is the property of Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Canada and the images may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email digital images for individual non-commercial use. To learn more about this project or to search the digital collection, go to <http://libguides.redeemer.ca/mes>.